
CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT OF THE HOSPITAL HEALTHCARE SERVICES FROM ROMANIA BY THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

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Abstract

The continuous quality improvement is an obligatory condition for the achievement and maintaining of the performance in healthcare services. Introducing the concepts of quality improvement in medical practice represents a distinctive component of the hospital reform in Romania. Healthcare quality is a more important principle in sanitary field, because the level of patients' knowledge is increasing concomitantly with the technological and therapeutic progresses.

The continuous quality improvement is an obligatory condition for the achievement and maintaining the performance in healthcare organization, especially in hospital.

The integration of many management systems (quality management, environmental management, security and occupational health management, information security management) and the development of an integrated management model applicable to Romanian hospitals, which have as principal goal to improve the performance of health services, represent a challenge for the Romanian health system. An integrated management system is a logical and systematic managerial approach, which permits taking-up optimum strategic and operational decisions. These decisions take into consideration all the essential aspects which lead to an efficient functionality of health organization, in terms of quality, environment, security and occupational health, and information security.

Keywords: healthcare, hospital, quality, integrated management system

JEL Classification: I 10, I 18, I 19

Introduction

The paper shows a continuation of many other anterior researches, in which we are underlining the importance of implementation and certification of the quality management system in Romanian hospitals, because we are considering that, between healthcare organizations, the hospital occupies a primordial place, being considered a health factory, which produces a very useful value for the society.

In a report of World Health Organisation Experts Committee, the hospital is defined as the element of an organization with medical and social character and its most important function is to assure the complete healthcare (curative, preventive and also recuperative) to

people. Hospital can be, likewise, a medical and biosocial research educational centre.

In our days, the *hospital became a strategic factor of therapeutics and medical education*, because, in such an institution, specialists have access to diagnosis and experimental equipment and get in contact with other specialists, building very important relationships for the scientific progress [5].

We developed an intense documentation activity which regarded the investigation of newest bibliographic sources, relevant for the health management and also the sanitary legislation, but we discovered that the complex problem of quality management in health services still has an incomplete treatment, frequently the theoretical concepts are not correlated with practical interests. That is why this research is oriented towards analyzing the advantages of implementation of an integrated management system (quality management, environmental management, security and occupational health management, information security management and ethics) in Romanian hospitals. We are considering that the implementation of such a system imposes seriousness in order to comply with EU exigencies regarding the quality level in health services.

The applicative character of this paper is revealed through the establishing of some action directions for continuous improvement of the Romanian hospitals' health services and for increasing the patient satisfaction. The used methodology was SWOT analysis, which was realized in some Romanian hospitals, considered representative for the proposed research (taking into consideration their medical speciality and the complexity of the medical casuistry): Oro – Maxillary – Facial Surgery Hospital, Central Military Hospital, Emergency Clinical Hospital Bagdasar-Arseni, Emergency Clinical Hospital for Children “Maria Sklodowska Curie”. The conclusions of this SWOT analysis, which we consider relevant for all Romanian hospitals, are synthetised in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

1. Results of Romanian Hospital Services SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis of above mentioned hospitals' services has permitted to relieve their principal strengths and weaknesses. (Fig. 1).

I N T E R N A L E N V I R O N M E N T	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competent specialists; • An important percentage of young specialists, capable to educate themselves in the spirit of EU and of new exigencies of health reform; • Availability to work overtime ; • Personnel with education in different fields, which contribute to the development of the capacity to resolve complex problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar level of remuneration for persons with different degrees of competence; • Deficiency in responsibility taking; • Low motivation, because of the weak capacity of differentiation between persons with different productivity • Organizational climate unfavourable for team work • Weak capacity to monitor the achievement degree of tasks, both at individual and interdepartmental level • Lack of continuity in task allotment • Lack of a career planning for employees and of a coherent politics for training and maintaining the employees • Lack of an integrated informational system

Fig. 1 Principal strengths and weakness of Romanian hospitals

The external environment analysis of hospitals relieved some opportunities for increasing the quality and efficiency of Romanian hospital healthcare, but also, many risks that Romanian hospitals are exposed to (Fig. 2).

E X T E R N A L E N V I R O N M E N T	OPPORTUNITIES	RISKS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health is a field with major social impact; • EU integration imposed the implementation of some standards and recommendations for increasing the quality and the efficiency of healthcare; • Romanian status as EU member opened new opportunities for financial incentives from European funds; • The interest of local authorities of public administration to take over a part of Health Ministry responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The increasing of patients expectations as a consequence of the increasing of patients knowledge and the liberty to travel in EU countries; • The technological and therapeutic progresses and diversification • The increasing of the demand for complex health services • The development of the private health system (a powerful competitor for public system) • Migration of personnel with high qualification, in fully developed countries • Aging of population

Fig. 2 – Principal opportunities and risks of Romanian hospitals external environment

Hospital managers need specifics knowledge, different from that which was necessary as executives: new procedures and methods of strategic planning, modern organization, human resources management, sanitary economy, financial management, sanitary control and evaluation, applied epidemiology etc.

The need to professionalizing health managers was recognized in political, academic fields. To answer to the need of professional formation, education programs at the National Institute of Health Medical Services, have been organized, starting 1990, which were transformed later in National Institute of Health Research and Development.

Moreover, in 2005 there was founded the National Post university School of Public Health and Health Management, which has as principal mission the post university education of the managers in the fields of public health and health management.

2. Quality Improvement – a Distinctive Component of the Hospital Reform in Romania

The continuous quality improvement is an obligatory condition for the achievement and maintaining of the performance in healthcare services.

The introduction in medical practice of the *quality improvement* concept represents a *distinctive component of the hospital reform in Romania*.

Healthcare quality is a more important principle in sanitary field, because the level of patients' knowledge is increasing concomitantly with the technological and therapeutic progresses. Healthcare quality has many dimensions, between them the most important are the efficiency, the continuity of healthcare, the patient insurance and the competence of the medical team, the patient satisfaction and the medical team satisfaction ([4]; [8]).

The Romanian Ministry of Public Health regularize and apply measures for the increasing of healthcare quality. So, one of the principal directions from the Strategic Plan of Romanian Ministry of Public Health for 2008-2013 is represented by the quality improvement of health services. Table 1 shows the general and specific objectives established by the Ministry of Public Health for increasing the hospital healthcare quality.

The objectives of increasing the hospital healthcare quality

Table1

General objectives	Specific objectives
The accomplishment of the compatibility with EU health standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard adoption for medical products, medical technologies, professional formation, information networks; • Introduction and usage of concepts regarding evidence based medicine and medical technologies evaluation; • Promotion of the cooperation between EU countries for health quality assurance; • Standardization of patient's safety measures.
Increasing the professional competences of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the basis and the specialty professional formation of medical personal; • Improving the continuous medical education of medical

medical personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> personnel; Increasing the communication abilities of medical personnel.
Unitary medical practices based on medical practice guides and clinic protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of an excellence centre for helping the systematic elaboration of the medical practice guides and protocols; Training of the professionals regarding the elaboration and the usage of medical practice guides and clinic protocols in health organization; National development and usage of practice protocols, including for the health services contracted with National Insurance House.
Hospital's evaluation from the perspective of the accreditation obtaining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formation the National Commission for Hospital Accreditation; Establishment of the competences according to hospital type, in conformity with the criteria of the National Commission for Hospital Accreditation; Elaboration of the procedures, standards and methodology of accreditation; Accreditation of all hospitals in the next 5 years; Reaccreditations of hospitals, if necessary.

Source: adaptation from the Strategic Plan of Romanian Ministry of Public Health for 2008-2013

Because the quality of health services provided by a medical unit must be officially confirmed by an impartial organism, *hospital accreditation has been recognized at international level as an external evaluation method of health services*. Accreditation is a nationwide seal of approval that indicates a hospital meets high performance standards. Our accreditation helps hospitals improve their performance, raise the level of patient care, and demonstrate accountability in the rapidly changing healthcare marketplace. The accreditation aims to: improve the quality, reduce costs, increase efficiency, increase and reinforce the reliability of the institution, improve health care services management, provide education, improve job satisfaction, secure equitable measuring and evaluation [6].

3. The Necessity of Creation an Integrated Management Model Applicable to Romanian Hospitals

If the quality assurance focused on the idea of nonconformity prevention and client satisfaction by eliminating the nonconformity causes, in return the *quality management underlines the importance of the continuous quality improvement in client satisfaction*. Applying the quality management principles promotes the orientation of health organization toward the long term continuous improvement of performances.

In order to efficiently exercise the medical profession it is a must that *physicians and health organization give a special importance to the environmental problems*, because they represent one of the factors with direct influence on population's health. *The medical waste management is a subject of great complexity, made up of a multitude of components representing a modern challenge to any manager of health organization*. The application of principles in waste management, a constitutive part of general function of management, is a necessary exigency in medical units, especially in hospitals, because they are the producers of residues, which could represent a risk to the safety and health of individuals and society.

In medical units, after the medical activity is done, results a series of residues which can be

classified according to practical criteria (the mode in which they result) in non-dangerous waste and dangerous waste [7].

In Romania it is necessary to increase the efforts to make the medical waste producers be aware of the risks this waste category can produce to the environment and to the individual's health. This action must regard: the creation of a systematic flow of information for the people about the consequence of the medical waste on the environment, the organization of the training programs in the field of ecology in sanitary schools or in universities and the financial allotment for the research in the technologies of medical waste neutralization or for the adoption of the technologies already existing abroad [3].

Security and occupational health management represents a very important component of hospital general management, being inter-operational with quality management and environmental management. The activities of security and occupational health assurance represent a complex leading instrument and involve the control of security and occupational health influence factors. Taking into account the necessity for controlling the risk factors of diseases and professional accidents into a hospital, it is indicated the standard OHSAS 18001:1999 recommendations should be respected.

Rapid developments are occurring in the medical field and this fact generated new problems of medical ethics. In genetics, in stem cell research, in biomedicine, these developments are opening up unknown opportunities for preventing, relieving and curing diseases. New methods of diagnosing and treating diseases are constantly being found. These developments arouse great expectations on the one hand, and great apprehension on the other. Particularly in genetics, but also in a number of other areas, fundamental ethical questions are being asked. These involve the attitude towards people and values and the principles that should govern medical actions [2].

To assure a high standard of quality in medical profession it is necessary that the professionals respect, first of all, the exactingness of *Medical Deontology Code*. To permanently follow the *Medical Deontology Code* it is recommended to constitute, in every health organization, a Commission of Medical Ethics and Deontology.

The integration of many management systems (quality management, environmental management, security and occupational health management, information security management) and the development of an integrated management model applicable to Romanian hospitals, which have as principal goal to improve the performance of health services, represent a challenge for the Romanian health system.

An integrated management system is a logical and systematic managerial approach, which permits taking-up optimum strategic and operational decisions. These decisions take into consideration all the essential aspects which lead to an efficient functionality of health organization, in terms of quality, environment, security and occupational health, information security.

Conclusions

The successful implementation of an integrated management system in a hospital represents a process which will generate the important changes in the entire management system of the hospital.

We are considering that the integration of many management systems into an integrated management system can have the followings *advantages*:

- the definition of quality, environment, security and occupational health, information security politics;
- the establishing of an unique frame for the continuous quality improvement of all activities deployed;
- the minimizing of maintenance costs for many management systems;
- the establishing of processes and problems regarding the environment, the security and occupational health which result from deployed activities;
- the priority establishing;
- the identification of the relevant regulations in the field;
- the optimization of the resources consumption;
- the improvement of adaptation capability to the market changing, to client's demands, to new trends.

By the development of an integrated quality management system it is possible to realize a holistic approach of organization processes and activities (through the health services quality and also the environment protection, security and occupational health, information security, medical ethics).

This integrated management system could help the increasing of hospital management performance by the formation of a pro-active managerial thinking in the line of Romanian health system managers, which means hospital organization development in the direction of present and future society needs.

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